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ABSTRACT

A program of faculty development was designed and implemented at Andrews University (Michigan). The training design included presentation of instructional theory, demonstration of instructional strategies, practice of the strategies by participants, feedback on practice sessions, and on-going peer- and instructor-support. The following topics were included: cooperative learning strategies to improve everyday instruction, dimensions of learning to improve planning, and role play teaching methodology to refine a technique already in use. Ninety-minute mini-sessions were scheduled one month after each all-day session. The implementation of the program after the first sessions was measured by personal implementation logs and study group logs. Self-reported use of cooperative techniques ranged from none to 10 reported uses. The most used cooperative structure during the reporting period was "Think-Pair-Share" and its variations. The major obstacle that emerged to the use of faculty study groups was time. While study groups are vital to the success of faculty development programs, the structure of the academy appears to work against their implementation. Among the lessons learned so far are that change requires commitment, implementation can begin small and grow but too slow a pace kills the process, a minimum number of instructional hours are required before implementation can begin, and it is more effective to schedule initial training in longer blocks. (JLS)

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ED 404 956

# Overcoming the Inertia of Traditional Instruction

*An Interim Report on the Social Work Faculty Development Program at Andrews University*

February 20, 1997

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# An Interim Report on the Social Work Faculty Development Program at Andrews University

### The Design of the Development Program

Since the Andrews University Social Work Faculty Development program was initiated after the beginning of the school year, the training design was created in a matter of hours. The basic training framework was based on the work of Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1988). Based on the Joyce-Showers model, the training would include the presentation of instructional theory, demonstration of instructional strategies, practice of the strategies by the participants, feedback on these practice sessions, and on-going support from peers and the training consultant.

I suggested content for program after an analysis of the needs of the department based on both the typical knowledge and skills taught in the social work program. Based on this analysis I recommended the training include the following topics:

1. cooperative learning strategies — to improve everyday instruction,
2. Dimensions of Learning (Marzano et al.) — to improve instructional planning, and
3. role play teaching methodology — to refine a technique already in use.

The training was to be delivered in three all-day sessions conducted on the fifth Wednesdays of October, January, and April. A 90-minute, mini-session would be scheduled one month after each all-day session. I anticipated the need of major program design revisions as the year unfolded. However, only one minor adaptation has been needed thus far: the training in Dimensions of Learning, a "unit" planning approach, was replaced with training in individual lesson planning.

**The Initial Training Immersion**

The first training session was conducted on Wednesday, October 30, 1996. All nine faculty members of the Social Work Department were present. I had planned to begin at 8:30 and conclude at 5:00. However, the faculty needed some time to discuss departmental matters and the session did not begin until approximately 9:30. Throughout the day, the faculty members were active participants in the training. By 4:00 p.m. we were all drained, so I dismissed the group before 5:00.

The focus of the initial training session, or immersion, was cooperative learning strategies. Throughout the day I "used the method to teach the method" (Joyce, 1991/92) That is, during my presentations I used the same cooperative strategies I wanted the participants to use in their classrooms. The faculty were introduced to simple and complex cooperative structures — seven (7) different cooperative techniques in the first training session.

In addition to emphasizing cooperative learning in the content of the training session, I presented the concept of whole-faculty study groups as a vehicle for supporting instructional change. Research in K-12 schools has shown whole-faculty study groups to be a powerful tool in the support of instructional improvement (Murphy, 1991, 1995). Study groups consist of four to six individuals who meet regularly (an average of at least an hour a week) with the explicit purpose of program improvement (Green & Henriquez-Roark, 1993). In this case the specific focus is on improvement of instruction in the program. At the beginning of the training session I placed the faculty

members into two study groups. The entire day of training was experienced in the context of these study groups.

I used an evaluation form to receive feedback on the initial training session. This data has been helpful in preparing later training sessions and in understanding the perspectives of the faculty members. I would characterize the evaluation as extremely positive. All numeric ratings fell within the range of 1.1 to 1.5, with 1 being the best possible score and 5 being the worst (see Attachment 1). One written suggestion asked that I plan time into the training session for faculty members to "design together possible implementation of stuff learned in this class." That had actually been designed into the day, but was dropped due to lack of time. The purpose of the study group is to provide time for those types of experiences.

**The January Training Immersion**

After completion of the initial training session and the 90-minute mini-session in November, the faculty members who had never received training in cooperative learning were experiencing frustration in their attempts to use cooperative techniques in the classroom. The training thus far had not been enough to empower the beginning faculty members in the use of cooperative learning. In planning the all-day session for January I decided to drop the Dimensions of Learning training, which would have taken the entire day, and do further training in cooperative learning. From conversations with faculty members I perceived that explicit training in planning for cooperative lessons was also needed. Again I "used the method to teach the method."

Before lunch we focused on the use of the T-Chart strategy. After lunch I demonstrated informal cooperative learning techniques from Johnson, Johnson, & Smith (1991). These are techniques that can easily be used to "interrupt" a traditional lecture and improve student factual recall. We closed the day with a debriefing session, trying to "fine tune" the development program and make it more user friendly.

As after the initial training session, I used an evaluation form to receive feedback on the January training session. This data will be used in preparing the February 90-minute session and the full-day session in April. Again, I would characterize this evaluation as extremely positive. All numeric ratings fell within the range of 1 to 1.4, with 1 being the best possible score and 5 being the worst (see Attachment 2). One respondent suggested that I change the time of day the training was offered. I am not quite sure how one would implement that suggestion. There aren't many options for the timing of an all-day session.

**The Implementation Process**

The whole purpose of a faculty development program (at least from my point of view) is to improve the quality of instruction that is occurring in an academic program. If the educational innovation is not being implemented in the classroom, the development program is not a success.

There are two sources of data I rely upon to assess the implementation process: the personal implementation log and the study group log. Between the October training session and the January training session there were six instructional weeks, therefore the possibility of receiving six personal implementation logs from each professor. One

professor submitted four personal logs, one professor submitted three personal logs, two professors submitted two logs each, two professor submitted one log each, and two professors submitted no personal logs (see Attachment 3). One of the professors who did not submit the "official" personal logs did submit a narrative listing of all cooperative techniques used throughout the fall quarter.

The reported use of cooperative techniques ranged from no reported uses to 10 reported uses. The most used cooperative structure during this reporting period was Think-Pair-Share and its variations (see Attachment 3). In interviews and informal conversations with the faculty member who did not report, I found that faculty member to be very active in implementation.

One faculty study group met twice during this period, and the other study group met three times. These meetings occurred during the three weeks immediately following the initial training session. Then Thanksgiving Break interrupted the process, followed quickly by Christmas break. Then the pressures of starting a new quarter worked against the resumption of study group meetings before the January training session.

The major concern or obstacle that has emerged in the implementation of study groups is time. Both study groups have identified finding time when all study group members can meet as being a challenge. With the full schedules we keep as faculty members this came as no surprise to anyone. So, study groups are vital to the success of faculty development programs, yet the structure of the academy works against the

easy implementation of study groups. The solution to this conundrum is an opportunity that awaits our action.

The January training appears to have been a metaphoric hurdle for some of the faculty members. Hesitance to use cooperative techniques appears to be waning. Confidence in personal abilities to use the techniques is growing. After making changes in the personal reporting system, the number of reports received appears to be increasing as well as the reported number of uses of cooperative learning. For example, for the week following the January training two faculty members reported more use of cooperative learning in one week than in the previous six weeks combined. My intuition told me that implementation would increase after the January training, and it appears this is happening. When I compile all of February's data we will see if this in fact has been the case.

**Lessons Learned**

Some of the content of this interim report could be viewed as negative or discouraging to persons unfamiliar with the instructional change process. But change is not often achieved in a whirlwind of activity, but in a dedicated, persevering effort to make many small steps in instructional improvement while never losing sit of the ultimate goal — improvement of outcomes for our students.

In this section I will identify some of the lessons we have "learned" from this initiative. Some of these lessons may not necessarily be "new." Some of the lessons could be anticipated from the literature on K-12 school improvement, but they are still "new" to us in higher education.

1. Change is a process that requires commitment at several levels — university, college, departmental, program, and personal. If commitment at any of these levels is questionable, the change process will be sabotaged.
2. For change to occur, commitment must be translated into several specific actions: dedicating time to training, dedicating time to regular collegial interaction focused on the initiative, financial support from administration, and patience with the frustrations that are inevitable with the change process.
3. Implementation can begin small and grow from there. However, if the growth occurs too slowly, the initiative will probably die.
4. A certain minimum number of hours of initial training (at least 15 - 20) is required before we can realistically expect faculty members to begin implementation. The number of hours required before implementation begins is inversely proportional to the extent a faculty member already uses instructional innovations ***and*** their commitment to the initiative.
5. Scheduling the initial training for three consecutive days prior to the beginning of the academic year is preferable to three days scattered throughout the year. The days throughout the year would be excellent as follow-up training days.
6. The Law of Inertia (an object at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted on by an external force; an object in motion tends to continue in its path unless acted on by an external force) seems to apply to the implementation of instructional change. In our faculty development program, the "object" (which is already in motion) is "instructional practice." It appears that an adequate "initial force" must

be applied in order to change the current "instructional practice" trajectory. These forces consist of training, personal choice, collegial support, administrative support, and the culture of the work place. Each individual requires different combinations and strengths of forces to create positive instructional change.

7. Study groups must meet regularly and keep their focus on instructional improvement if they are to function as a support mechanism for instructional change.

My interpretation/evaluation of these lessons:

8. A paradigm shift needs to occur in the faculty's perceptions of this faculty development program. Even faculty members who are supportive of the process have referred to the program as "my" ("Burton's") program. This program must belong to the Social Work faculty if is to succeed. The study groups must become "our" study groups instead of "his" study groups.

9. The teaching aspect of faculty advancement must receive equal billing with the research dimension of advancement. There must be some type of incentive for a faculty member to intensely engage in the improvement of instruction. For some, personal satisfaction will be enough, but that is not true for all.

10. The force (see #6 above) I see working against our efforts at this point is the culture of the work place. The critical issue is "time." This is true for both training and the regular study group meetings. Across the university, all faculty members are very busy. The Social Work department is no exception. If

anything, the Social Work department is even more busy than most departments. (This is particularly true of those involved in the accreditation process.) Success of the current faculty development initiative is dependent on the success of the faculty study groups. However, unless adaptations can be made in the culture of the work place to encourage and expect the regular meeting of the study groups, this initiative will not reach its full potential.

**Where do we go from here?**

1. We need to explore options for scheduling study group sessions.
2. We need to explore options for increasing support for study groups at both the faculty and administrative level.
3. We must continue to refine our data collection techniques to facilitate faculty reporting. We must know what is going on in classrooms in order to share successes and learn from each other.
4. I need to continue in-class observation of faculty members. The focus of the observations will be coaching, not evaluation.
5. In-class observation should expand to include fellow study group members. Group members could visit a colleague's classroom for one period, observe the instruction, and then have a debriefing session with their colleague afterwards. The process would benefit both. The observer will get creative ideas from a colleague, and the observed will be able to reflect on his/her teaching with a colleague.

6. Future staff development initiatives need to be planned in a collaborative effort between faculty members and a staff development consultant. This will allow faculty members to "own" the program from the start and not feel like the program is being "handed down" to them.

# Attachment 1:
# Evaluation Summary

October 30 Training Session

**1. Quality of the presentation:**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interesting | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | Dull |
| Well prepared | 1 | 1.1 | 5 | Poorly prepared |
| Effective Techniques | 1 | 1.2 | 5 | Poor techniques |
| Sensitive to Audience | 1 | 1.1 | 5 | Oblivious to audience |

**2. Value of these materials:**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practical | 1 | 1.3 | 5 | Unrelated to my work |
| Useable | 1 | 1.5 | 5 | Not useable |
| Recommend this session | 1 | 1.3 | 5 | Would not recommend |

**3. If I had to do it all over again I would attend this workshop.**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definitely Yes! | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | Definitely No! |

4. **Please make comments that would help us to improve the workshop.** What went well? What would you like us to do differently? (Constructive criticism and compliments gratefully accepted.)

It was well done.

Time to design together possible implementation of stuff learned in class.

Liked: Sharing, turn-taking, questions answered
Refreshed my memory, affirmed my skills — thanks
You allowed our foolishness

I like color overheads with some graphics for variety.

May want to nudge us gently back on task (delicate task) but we do need to keep spontaneity as well.
Genuine, relaxed style.
Appreciated flexibility of task.

# Attachment 2:
# Evaluation Summary

January 29 Training Session

**1. Quality of the presentation:**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interesting | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | Dull |
| Well prepared | 1 | 1.2 | 5 | Poorly prepared |
| Effective Techniques | 1 | 1.2 | 5 | Poor techniques |
| Sensitive to Audience | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | Oblivious to audience |

**2. Value of these materials:**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practical | 1 | 1.2 | 5 | Unrelated to my work |
| Useable | 1 | 1.2 | 5 | Not useable |
| Recommend this session | 1 | 1.0 | 5 | Would not recommend |

**3. If I had to do it all over again I would attend this workshop.**

| | Best rating | Average for this session | Worst rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definitely Yes! | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | Definitely No! |

4. **Please make comments that would help us to improve the workshop.** What went well? What would you like us to do differently? (Constructive criticism and compliments gratefully accepted.)

Change the time of day offered

Enjoy your adapting to college level, your going with our flow, and willingness to accommodate our need for efficient reporting mechanisms!

A very minor suggestion, but I personally prefer color overheads with occasional graphics — clip art or whatever.

# Attachment 3:
# Personal Implementation Log Tabulation

Reports Through Wednesday, January 29, 1997

| Cooperative Technique | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reports submitted** | **4** | **1** | **1** | **0** | **3** | **2** | **2** | **written summary** |
| Turn-to-Your-Neighbor (Pairs) | 2 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Think-Pair-Share | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Think-Pair-Square | | | | | | | | |
| Think-Square-Share | | | | | | | | |
| Jigsaw | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Expert Jigsaw | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Numbered Heads Together | | | 2 | | | | | |
| Roundtable | | | | | | | | |
| Roundrobin | | 1 | | | 3 | | | |
| 4S Brainstorming | | | | | | | | |
| 3-Minute Pause | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Other: | Random call — 1 | | | | | | Quiet Signal — 1 | Random Call — 2 |
| Other: | Group Presentation — 2 | | | | | | | Agree/ Disagree — 2 |
| Other: | | | | | | | | Simulation — 1 |
| # of reported uses | 9 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 10 |

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